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Leza L Olson 11/03/2006 09:04:57 AM From DB/Inbox: Leza L Olson

Cable  
Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 04373

SIPDIS  
CXTela:  
ACTION: POL  
INFO: IPSC DCM PD IMO RES ECON ADM RSO CONS DAO AMB  
AID

DISSEMINATION: POL  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: POL/C:MJSIEVERS  
DRAFTED: POL:MCKEAYS  
CLEARED: DAO:TWILLIAMSON, DDUKE

VZCZCTVI082  
PP RUEHC RUCNIRA RHMFISS RUEKJCS RHEHNSC RUEKJCS  
DE RUEHTV #4373/01 3061559  
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7369  
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 004373

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA (MAHER), PM  
PENTAGON FOR OSD ISRAEL DESK OFFICER (ANDERSON)  
NSC FOR LOGERFO  
JOINT STAFF FOR J-5  
HQ USEUCOM FOR ECJ5-E (KLOTHE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MASS](#) [IR](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAELI MISSILE DEFENSE AGENCY HEAD ON MISSILE  
THREATS TO ISRAEL

Classified By: Marc J. Sievers, Political Counselor.  
Reasons: 1.4 (b, d).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) In an October 8 meeting, Israel Missile Defense Agency head Arie Herzog told visiting House Armed Services Committee counsel Roger Zakheim that Israel is working with the U.S. to address (a) a gap in its missile defense (MD) capability vis-a-vis a potential future threat of Iranian nuclear-tipped missiles; and (b) its inability to defend itself against Katyusha and Kassam rockets. Herzog confirmed information shared by Israeli MOD sources to the effect that the MOD is now exploring chemical laser and kinetic missile defense systems, and that Northrop Grumman is lobbying the GOI on its Skyguard system. Herzog warned that Iran could acquire a nuclear weapons capability as early as 2009, and stressed that Israel hopes that the U.S. will help to fill in its "capability gap" from 2009-2014 by adding a layer of missile defense involving Aegis class guided missile cruisers. Israel is also hoping that the U.S. Congress will authorize funding for future joint research in missile defense. He said that he believes Israel would support a regional missile defense architecture that would protect the Gulf states, should the USG decide to pursue that course.  
END SUMMARY.

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HERZOG: CURRENT MD SYSTEM COULD NOT COUNTER NUCLEAR IRAN  
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12. (C) Herzog claimed that Israel's existing missile defense system addresses the threat posted by conventional Shahab-3 missiles: Israel has two operational batteries and is moving to a national missile defense architecture that includes four different radar stations, six different launch areas, and provides coverage for the entire country. Herzog characterized it as a system with two layers of defense that is interoperable with Israeli and U.S. Patriot batteries.

13. (C) Herzog warned that once Iran develops a nuclear weapons capability, this will fundamentally change the situation for Israel. He said that Israel's Arrow anti-missile system is "good," but cannot provide a one-hundred percent guarantee. It is more effective as a deterrent, and all it would take is one nuclear tipped missile to make it through the protective umbrella that the Arrow system provides. He added that missiles tipped with unconventional weapons need to be hit high in their trajectory. If a nuclear missile were hit low in the trajectory, the damage that would be caused on the ground would be significant.

14. (C) Herzog said that in addition to the defense umbrella that Arrow provides, Israel needs to defend itself at a higher tier in order to deal with the Iranian nuclear threat. He claimed that the Israeli Missile Defense Organization (IMDO) started to work on this with the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) in 2005 under the Arrow Segment Improvement Program (ASIP). The aim of this joint work is to improve the chances that Israel's anti-missile system would hit a nuclear-tipped missile coming from Iran. Herzog said that Israel hopes to "start the next phase" of the program to enhance its anti-missile capability in 2008, and would welcome U.S. support to address Israel's capability gap from 2009 to 2014 until Israel can fill the gap itself. Herzog suggested that this gap in its defense system could be filled using Aegis guided missile cruisers armed with SM-3 interceptors to provide a higher tier of defense. He said that he believes that Iran might acquire a nuclear weapons capability in 2009.

15. (C) Herzog claimed that this potential solution -- involving the Aegis class ships -- will be tested during the next round of Juniper Cobra (joint missile defense) exercises scheduled for March 2007. In the meantime, he said, IMDO is working with the MDA to determine if this is technically possible. At some point, a political decision would have to be made at the Cabinet level in the USG.

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HERZOG ON REGIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE  
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16. (C) Responding to Zakheim's question about Israeli attitudes towards a missile defense architecture for the Gulf region, Herzog said that he believes regional missile defense should be considered as soon as possible. Israel, he claimed, would be interested in this, and would accept a regional detection and interception system. He also suggested that the U.S. consider drawing Turkey into any discussion concerning a regional MD architecture. Herzog added that Aegis class ships could also be positioned in the Persian Gulf and still cover Israel.

17. (C) Herzog noted that groups within the Israeli MOD and Pentagon are already discussing the political and technical aspects of U.S.-Israel MD cooperation. The Israeli side is headed by the IDF's Head of Strategic Planning, BGEN Udi Dekel. He understood that BGEN Dekel has a counterpart in EUCOM.

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HERZOG ON SHORT-RANGE THREATS TO ISRAEL  
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¶8. (C) Herzog said that Israel is unprepared to deal with the threat posed by short- and medium-range rockets. He claimed that almost three years ago, the GOI told the MDA that short-range ballistic missile and rocket threats were developing in Lebanon. As a result of this, the U.S. and Israel started to research this two years ago, and Congress granted Israel USD 2 million in 2006, and USD 24 million in 2007 to research possible solutions to these threats. The idea, he said, is to come up with a system that (a) can intercept threats 30-250 kilometers out; (b) utilizes a fast and agile interceptor; (c) covers all of northern Israel; and (d) addresses the threat posed by the Zelzal missile. Herzog claimed that the Arrow missile system and PAC-3 Patriots are not sufficient to intercept rockets and missiles launched 30-250 kilometers from Israel. (NOTE: Herzog added that no Iranian Zelzals were fired at Israel during its recent war with Hizballah in southern Lebanon. He claimed that the missile was launched as a result of an Israeli air attack on its launcher. When the missile crashed, Hizballah pointed to this, claiming that it had shot down an Israeli aircraft. END NOTE.)

¶9. (C) Herzog referred to a project called "David's Sling," that he said Rafael and Raytheon are working on. He said that if funding is found for the project, it could become operational by 2010-2011. Herzog anticipates that the program will cost USD 60 million in 2008, and that Israel will approach the U.S. for funding support. (He envisions a scenario in which the U.S. contributes USD 40 million, and Israel USD 20 million.) Some of the parts for the program would be developed in Israel, others in the U.S. The system will be mobile and use advanced missile interceptors with rocket motors, advanced radars, and offer a low-cost, hit-to-kill capability. Herzog claimed that this new system would cost one-tenth of the current hit-to-kill capability, could cover all of northern Israel, and would be able to hit Zelzal missiles. It would be comprised of three radars, three command-and-control posts, and three interceptor batteries with six launchers per battery. Each battery will have 50 interceptors.

¶10. (C) Herzog also referred to a missile defense project, the mobile Tactical High Energy Laser (MTHL) that, he claimed, can address the threat posed by Katyusha and Kassam rockets. Formerly known as the Nautilus -- which was a stationary variant -- it is now being referred to as the Skyguard project. Herzog said that Nautilus had been canceled in 2005 by the U.S. Army due to its preference for a solid-state laser. He said that the Israeli MOD is now trying to define a new solution to the Katyusha and Kassam threat as a result of the war with Hizballah in southern Lebanon. One potential solution is to "re-open" the Nautilus program. He claimed that Northrop-Grumman is lobbying for the Skyguard program in Israel.

¶11. (U) House Armed Services Committee counsel Roger Zakheim did not have the opportunity to clear on this cable.

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JONES